

**Social Security Administration (SSA)
2007 Annual Report to Congress on Implementation of Public Law (P.L.) 106-107**

I. Overview

SSA funds grants and cooperative agreements in support of three discretionary grant programs. There are no mandatory grant programs. During the reporting period, SSA funded a total of \$40 million under the following Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) grant authorities:

Research and Demonstration Programs Funded Under CFDA 96.007--Social Security Research and Demonstration:

- Research--Retirement Research Consortium, \$6.4 million (16 percent);
- Demonstration--Youth Transition Project Demonstration, \$4.68 million (11 percent); and
- Demonstration--Homeless Outreach Projects and Evaluation, \$4 million (10 percent).

Service Program Funded Under CFDA 96.008--Social Security Benefits Planning, Assistance and Outreach Program:

- Service--Work Incentives Planning and Assistance, \$18 million (46 percent).

Service Program Funded Under CFDA 96.009--Social Security State Grants for Work Incentives Assistance to Disabled Beneficiaries:

- Service--Protection and Advocacy for Beneficiaries of Social Security, \$6.7 million (17 percent).

SSA continued to participate in several grants streamlining initiatives during this reporting period that improved the effectiveness and performance of grants programs, simplified the grants application and reporting processes, improved the delivery of services to the public and facilitated greater communication among those responsible for delivering services.

SSA continued to be involved with several government-wide workgroups and committees. Specifically, SSA staff actively participated in monthly meetings for the Grants Executive Board, Grants Management Line of Business (GMLoB), Grants Policy Committee and the Federal Financial Assistance Transparency Act (FFATA) Committee. In addition, staff participated with the FFATA Subcontractor Subcommittee and the Grants.gov Usability Workshop.

SSA responded to the GMLoB Survey in July providing updated information regarding SSA's grants management investment, programs and transaction information. In addition, SSA actively pursued aligning with one of the GMLoB consortia lead agencies established to provide shared services according to common interests among agencies and process grants in a decentralized

way using common business processes supported by shared technical support services. SSA staff completed the required GMLoB fit-gap analysis forwarded to OMB prior to the December 31, 2007 deadline.

During the reporting period, staff provided timely responses to several requests for comment, information and updates including:

- P.L. 106-107 Reauthorization Document;
- Grants.gov 2007 Ramp-up Plan;
- GMLoB Proposal to Consolidate Support for Interagency Grants Initiatives; and
- Fiscal Year (FY) 2008 Report to Congress on the Benefits of the President's e-Government Initiatives.

II. Grants.gov

The Grants.gov initiative benefits SSA and its grant programs by providing a single location to publish grant funding opportunities and application packages, as well as by providing a single site for the grants community to apply for grants using common forms, processes and systems. SSA derives its largest source of benefits from Grants.gov through increased organizational efficiencies. Along with two Agency-specific forms, SSA uses Grants.gov government-wide forms 100 percent of the time for its application packages.

Overall Statistics

SSA posted eight grant announcements in FY 2007 representing 100 percent of the Agency's funding opportunities. Six SSA grant programs were available for electronic application through Grants.gov also representing 100 percent of the Agency's grant programs. SSA received 331 grant applications electronically through Grants.gov in FY 2007, representing 99 percent of the applications received (3 paper applications were received because of technical difficulties that prevented the electronic submission of applications). SSA did not eliminate any grant announcement and application sites or systems because of failure to use Grants.gov.

Training and Outreach for Grants.gov Users (Agencies and Grantees)

SSA accomplished grantee training using Internet publication of policies and training guidelines, telephone help desk and SSA hosted nationwide preapplication seminars. Internal Agency training and outreach also consisted of Intranet publication of policies and guidance, as well as personal one-on-one training as needed.

Outreach Efforts to Grant Community and Internal Outreach

Outreach to the grant community included SSA-hosted seminars and published guidance and policies. Internally, SSA trained additional Grants Management Specialists to share Grants.gov administration responsibilities and to serve as backup to the primary Grants.gov point of contact. SSA continued to issue policies and guidance as necessary to alert SSA staff of changes that occurred throughout the reporting period.

Cost Savings Achieved Through Use of Grants.gov

By not having to develop a separate system for applicants to search and apply for Federal grants, SSA estimates the Agency's cost avoidance at approximately \$1 million. Cost savings included \$1,500 in printing fees associated with paper applications, \$500 in postage for paper applications and \$20,000 in reduced personnel costs as a result of using electronic applications.

All SSA application packages for competitive SSA grant opportunities were posted in Grants.gov FIND.

III. Grants Management Line of Business

SSA anticipates that the key benefit to partnering with a consortia lead will be having a centralized location to download all applications, make awards and track awards to closeout. Automated business processes available through consortium service providers will decrease Agency reliance on manual and paper-based processing. Consortium lead agencies will spread operations and maintenance costs, development, modernization and enhancement costs across agencies, decreasing the burden that any one agency must bear. GMLoB will lead to a reduction in the number of systems of records for grants data across both SSA and the Government. In addition, the development of common reporting standards will improve SSA's ability to provide Agency and Governmentwide reports on grant activities and results. Migrating to a consortium lead agency will help SSA comply with the Federal Financial Assistance Management Improvement Act of 1999 and the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006. Service to constituents will be improved through the standardization and streamlining of Governmentwide grants business processes. The public will receive timesavings because of quicker notification and faster payments through an automated system for grants processing. Furthermore, GMLoB will minimize complex and varying agency-specific requirements and increase grantee ease of use on Federal grants management systems. Constituents will benefit, as they will have fewer unique agency systems and processes to learn. Grantees' ability to learn how to use the system will be improved and reliance on call center technical support will be reduced. Consortium lead agencies will also provide grantees with online access to standard post-award reports, decreasing the number of unique agency-specific reporting requirements.

As of November 30, 2007, SSA has interviewed all current consortia leads for partnership consideration. Of the three current consortia leads, the Department of Health and Human Services' Administration for Children and Families (ACF) appears to be the closest fit for SSA's requirements. The National Science Foundation's system is structured to primarily service research grants and modifications to meet SSA's needs would be prohibitively expensive. In addition, the Department of Education (Ed) has not progressed far enough with the development of its system to be of benefit to SSA. However, plans for future development seem promising, and SSA intends to reevaluate the potential for partnership once planned modules are in place.

SSA worked extensively with ACF to review their current system. In addition to several informational meetings and ACF system demonstrations, ACF provided SSA access to their system and allowed the Agency to conduct a pilot over an approximate 2-month period. SSA finalized a cost-benefits analysis and fit-gap analysis and submitted the required analysis and templates to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) in December 2007. The result of

SSA's analysis is that while ACF appears to be the closest fit, the cost savings at present are minimal. SSA, therefore, requested a waiver in lieu of signing a Memorandum of Understanding until such time that the improvements and additions to the Ed system can be better evaluated. SSA also intends to investigate other partnership opportunities that may be available with nonconsortia lead agencies.

IV. Debarment and Suspension

On August 17, 2007, SSA published a nonprocurement debarment-suspension regulation in a new Agency chapter in Subtitle B of 2 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR). SSA's codification is located at 2 CFR 2336. The notice simultaneously removed the Agency's codification of the common rule from its own section 20 CFR 436. SSA has updated all appropriate guidance and award instruments to reflect the new location of this rule.

V. Looking Ahead

SSA intends to continue its support and use of Grants.gov by maintaining 100 percent participation for posting and applying for grant opportunities. The Agency will continue to participate with other Federal grants partners in an effort to further improve and streamline its process. In addition, SSA plans to devote time for evaluating and streamlining its internal grants process and pursue identifying an appropriate GMLoB partner for managing the Agency's grant workload. SSA currently devotes approximately 20 percent effort of two employees toward these activities. The Agency plans to continue this level of support as needed in FY 2008 and FY 2009.